ESTABLISHING STATE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE QUALITY OF TEACHERS (1850 – 1952)

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Editor's Introduction:

The responsibility for certifying teacher qualifications and competence has not always been a state function. Early in California history, that responsibility was held by schools and districts. Hendrick, historian and educational scholar, recounts the movement to increase professionalism in teaching through state standards and uniform governance. He describes the rising influence of normal schools, teacher education faculty and, particularly, the University of California.

Most of the important issues concerning the preparation and credentialing of teachers in California have arisen repeatedly over the past hundred and forty years. Early and late there have been disagreements about which group of educators—or the state—should exercise primary control over teacher quality and entry into the profession. Early and late there have been disagreements over the efficacy of teacher examinations as a requirement for teacher credentials. Early and late there have been disagreements over the relative value of pedagogical knowledge and academic content knowledge as paramount objectives for credentialing teachers. Perhaps all of this was inevitable. Since public education had emerged in America primarily as a state responsibility, in the absence of any generally apparent need to enforce agreed upon standards of technical competence, it followed that the states and their citizens would assert responsibility over the qualifications of public school teachers. How best to pursue that responsibility became the subject of continuing controversy, debate, and policy shifts.

Just as important as the training and credentialing of teachers to the issue of teacher quality has been the hiring of teachers by local school districts. Notwithstanding some periodic increase or decrease in state authority and responsibility for teacher certification, local hiring decisions have consistently made the critical difference in the quality of teaching. Local authorities have always held the key in selecting teachers.

The role of state officials in credentialing teachers followed almost inevitably from the state's need to provide teachers for the newly mandated system of common schools. Within two years of statehood, the legislature required that every teacher "to recover wages for services rendered, must have a certificate of qualification from the Superintending Committee of the School in which services were rendered" (Cal. Stats.1891, c. 126, Art IVi).

Above everything else, the enterprise of preparing and credentialing teachers has been an intensely pragmatic affair. Many of the controversies over the decades concerned how to keep a steady stream of teachers present in the schools, and do so in the presence of dramatic growth in the school population. Besides arguments over the amount and nature of a teacher's formal preparation, there were arguments over who should be permitted to make the determination about what that preparation should consist of. For example, should individual school districts, the counties, colleges and universities, the profession, or the state hold most of the influence in defining what pattern of preparation teachers should be held to?

Most of the story over teacher credentialing to date is a story about dealing with issues of control and the substance of preparation. Side issues and strategy shifts over the years demonstrate how state government has coped with the larger issue of teacher qualifications. Direct responsibility by the state, shared responsibility with counties and teacher preparing institutions, and neglect are all part of that story.

In the earliest decades of statehood local communities held the strongest claim on teachers and their qualifications. Teachers enjoyed a closeness to their pupils and communities which they gradually lost under the press of industrialization and urbanization. The only qualification for teaching in those years was a willingness to teach and an ability to pass the scrutiny of a local school committee. As was the case with many nineteenth century professions, a college education was not a requirement. Local school committees were not infrequently made up of illiterate persons who were not above applying capricious standards in favor of hiring their friends and relatives for the low status job of teacher. Yet, no matter how low the salary or how low the status, the occupation always held an attraction for someone. Often it was attractive to women whose own nineteenth century identities were closely associated with child rearing. State law during the early years made no restrictions on the level or subject that a teacher could

teach and local school committees were not about to enforce any restriction themselves. An obvious consequence of minimal preparation of teachers and easy access to the occupation was low status and little teacher independence from school committees in the management of schools.

Initially low standards of qualifications implied no mandated level of educational attainment for teachers. Certainly no formal teacher training or certification requirements existed during the 1850s, although State Superintendent Paul K. Hubbs did organize teacher conventions in 1854 and in 1856 for the purpose of informing and inspiring teachers. In 1861 State Superintendent Andrew Moulder attracted 250 teachers to a three-day State Teachers Institute dedicated to enhancing their pedagogical skills. Featured topics at the event included a speech stressing the need for uniform state textbooks, a gymnastics demonstration, a discussion of school discipline, and a lecture on "Methods of Teaching." Similar events were held in 1862 and 1863.

Modest attempts to initiate state teacher training and certification requirements occurred during the 1850s and 1860s. State Superintendents Andrew Moulder and John Swett persuaded the legislature to establish a state board of examiners to license teachers in 1859 and a state normal school to train them in 1862. Even after establishment of a state board of examiners, the testing and licensing of teachers followed no set pattern.

Earliest responsibility rested with local districts. Beginning with legislation written by State Superintendent John Swett, which won legislative approval in 1863, the State Board of Education became responsible for examinations of teachers at all levels. The triumph of state authority was more apparent than real, however, as local school boards continued to hire and rehire teachers according to criteria they approved. There was, even as early as the 1860s, some modest advantage for teachers to pass the state examination—as contrasted with a county examination. While the locally prepared examinations were generally valid for just one year, the examinations established by the state authorized service for two, three, or four years, depending on the teacher's score. From the 1860s forward into the twentieth century, the counties exercised authority to issue certificates to elementary teachers, an authority that was expanded under the second constitution of 1879 to include "grammar-grade" (secondary) certificates as well.

The efforts of State Superintendents John Moulder and John Swett, particularly Swett, helped to centralize a measure of authority in certifying teachers in the hands of state authorities. In a sense, the victory of the state superintendents constituted a victory for the teachers as well. Teachers had been humiliated by the capricious practices of local school officials and desired assurance that their certificates would be valid for life, or at least beyond the impulsive judgment of local school politicians. The State Board, unsurprisingly, worked to concentrate authority at its own level and did so by controlling examinations. Regrettably, it soon became apparent that both local and state corruption reigned supreme in the examination of teachers.

Questions from the state teachers' examination leaked out of Sacramento on one notorious occasion and created a major scandal. On Friday, November 29, 1878, the San Francisco *Evening Bulletin* printed questions that were to appear on the examination scheduled for the following day. The city editor of the *Evening Bulletin*, posing as a teacher, had successfully secured the questions, thereby exposing corruption in the state's certification system. The scandal gave delegates to the second constitutional convention added incentive for placing the examination of teachers and the granting of certificates under local control.

The county examinations authorized in the second constitution for testing teacher fitness were hardly more successful—or less corrupt—than the state examinations had been. But five years of examination sales under state authority hardly inspired confidence in the State Board of Education and its authority. Under the second constitution of 1879 (IX, 7, 305) all teacher examination authority was returned to city and county school boards. Satisfaction with the local system of examinations was short lived. Much of California's educational literature from the 1880s reflected a growing dissatisfaction with teacher examinations of any kind. In June, 1887 the State Board of Education urged county board members to abstain from coaching candidates preliminary to their examinations. Little attention was paid to this request, and two years later the legislature made it a misdemeanor for a board member to prepare candidates (Cal. Stats., 1889, 160:1776).

While it is difficult to see any good coming from the legacy of corruption in teacher examinations, one might imagine—if only a bit cynically—that teaching credentials were coveted at least enough to stimulate cheating. Perhaps teachers were gaining a measure of status

as a result of being certified. The state's loss of authority was more important than any new status coming to teachers. The State Board of Education retained a measure of authority over the granting of Educational and Life Diplomas, but only on the recommendation of cities and counties. Yet, the 1880s were to witness the high water mark in local authority. Over time, from the 1890s to the present, the state, through the Legislature and Board of Education, regained control and eventually became dominant in setting requirements for teachers.

As a general rule, it has seemed that the increase of profession like standards, e.g., higher levels of education for teachers, came from education leaders themselves. Often a state superintendent of public instruction, a professional organization, or an elite study commission would take the lead. Generally speaking, shifts in entry requirements or bases for authority and control came in each instance after significant public outcry over a perceived abuse. Stated differently, in the absence of public controversy, state public education leaders generally were able to direct the course of reform and evolving professional standards.

The early renaissance of state authority over teacher qualifications during the 1891-1892 legislative session was accompanied by an interesting and long-term symbiotic relationship between teacher preparation institutions and the State Board of Education. Indeed, that legislation did much to initiate a close relationship between the normal schools, the University of California, and the State Superintendent of Public Instruction. Greater state control over certification came after 1893 when the legislature empowered the State Board of Education to issue grammar-grade certificates and life diplomas to normal-school graduates (Cal. Stats., 1893, 193:1775). In the same year the State Board, acting in its capacity as trustees for the state normal schools, began to exercise a measure of control over the pedagogical preparation of teachers coming in from out of state. The legislature clearly was moving to establish its own authority. Happily, there was also some desire on the part of school districts to increase teacher standards, and to do so by insisting not on the passing of an examination, but rather on completing a normal school program. Not surprisingly, local school officials sometimes objected to their loss of control over teacher preparation.

Nevertheless, the trend toward state authority was reinforced in 1897 when the State Supreme Court ruled in *Mitchell v. Winnek* (1897) 117 Cal. 520, that the legislature could prescribe the

requirements for teacher certification. The issue had been in doubt because the constitution had given county superintendents and boards control over teachers' examinations and teaching certificates. In effect, the ruling opened the door to a strange dualistic pattern of teacher licensure. Counties were still permitted to issue certificates, but all regularly licensed teachers were required to possess a state "credential" before the county could issue a "certificate." Except for a few emergency, substitute, and other short-term teaching authorizations that required only a certificate, the county certification process involved little more than registering state credentials. Importantly as well, when the state resumed its influence and control over defining teacher credentialing standards at the turn of the century, it placed its support behind normal school and university courses, not examination performance.

Beginning in 1901 newly prepared teachers needed to graduate from an "approved program" at a normal school or university in order to be eligible for a "life diploma," the most permanent and desirable form of teacher certification. County school boards could still issue six-year Grammar Grade Certificates on the basis of examinations, but this form of authorization was valid only in the county where it was issued. The State Board, on the other hand, assumed complete responsibility for high school certification, thereby substantially reducing the rights of the county boards.

Taking stock of the teacher preparation and credentialing dynamic at the turn of the century, one can observe several large principles being played out. As the state grew in population, complexity, and wealth, the Legislature and State Board of Education were becoming better able to assert their will over local units of government. That notwithstanding, local school districts were still more important to the actual implementation of policy than was state authority. After all, local school officials actually hired the teachers. Often they needed to hire many of them, and at minimal cost.

The growth of formal institutions of education, including universities and normal schools, resulted in a symbiotic relationship developing between state education officials and higher education personnel. Given bad experiences on all fronts with teacher examinations, state education officials reasoned that the advance of state authority should be accompanied by higher levels of teacher education. State education officials, including the forty-five member State

Educational Commission of 1900, wanted to empower the University of California to define appropriate standards for high school teachers. The major political phenomenon coming from the Commission Report was that teachers demanded the state to use its regulatory powers to control the conditions by which cities and counties could issue teaching certificates.

Accompanying that development was realization that the State Board needed to require trained or professional teachers (Brodt, 1989, 27-30). The Board was given responsibility for establishing minimum standards for teachers, and it did so by determining which teacher preparing programs were equivalent to graduation from the University of California with a recommendation from the faculty. Interestingly from the perspective of contemporary history, enhancing standards of teacher quality also implied enhancing normal school and university training standards, as well as eliminating local and county examinations.

The results were dramatic. Over a seventeen year period between 1899 and 1916, the number of state credentials issued on the basis of a teacher's level of training completed increased by nearly a factor of five, while the number of credentials awarded on the basis of examinations declined by a factor of nine (Brodt, 1989, p. 30). In order to insure that the University of California give appropriate and adequate attention to pedagogy, the State Board was authorized to require all college and university credential graduates to take the minimum amount of pedagogy prescribed by the State Board. Herein lies the beginning of the state attending to what it saw as the well being of the profession by requiring some course work in pedagogy prior to issuing a credential. Thus, if support for pedagogical studies could not be won on the University campus because of resistance from the liberal arts faculty, at least it could be mandated by the state (State Education Commission, 1900, pp. 8-15).

By 1905, California became the first state to require a fifth year of college work for secondary teaching credentials, and by 1906 the fifth year included a full year of graduate study. For nearly thirty years California was the only state to require a fifth year for secondary teaching credentials. Importantly the State Board was now in the business of prescribing the quantity and nature of a teacher's pedagogical training. Had the University of California been willing to assume leadership for the professional training of teachers, likely it would have been given that responsibility, at least for a while. While the actual number of pedagogical courses—or semester

hours—required for secondary teachers did not change substantially between 1905 and the early 1960s, the nature of the prescribed work did change. A 1906 ruling required that a minimum of one-third of the prescribed work in pedagogy should consist of practice teaching in a well-equipped training school (Chu, 1945, p. 75).

In 1914 the number of semester hours in prescribed pedagogy was increased from twelve to fifteen for secondary teachers. At the same time, the State Board required each candidate to take at least one graduate course in a subject he or she expected to teach (Cal. State Board of Education, 1914, 4). During the next several years the number of semester hours in education prescribed by the State Board was to rise as high as twenty-one, and by 1921 it had settled at eighteen where it remained until 1951 when it was increased to twenty-two.

An interesting development involving the State Board's support for, indeed its promotion of, professional training occurred in 1914. In that year, the Board presumed to transfer methods courses from academic departments to the Education Department at the University of California. This was done for the declared purpose of encouraging "the development of real professional schools of education with dignity at least equal to those of law, medicine, engineering, and theology" (Cal. State Board of Education, 1916, 46). Thus, it was the state, led by state educational leaders, that encouraged, indeed practically required a reluctant University of California faculty and administration to create a Department and then a School of Education at Berkeley.

Meanwhile, as part of the centralizing the credentialing authority at the state level, the normal school principals met regularly with the State Board. These meetings were accompanied by a flurry of rules and regulations establishing and tightening state credentialing standards. By 1917 the legislature had given the State Board complete control and responsibility over the normal schools with an accompanying mandate to unify and raise their standards (Brodt, 1989, p. 32). Assisting the State Board in that work was a new Commission on Credentials.

State mandated professional requirements for teaching credentials was merely one example of how state reformers showed interest in mandating socially sensitive programs. The elimination of child labor from industry during the second decade of the twentieth century had an important

effect on teacher training. After reaching a peak of employment in 1910, child labor decreased sharply. By 1920, only 8.5 percent of children between the ages of ten and fifteen years of age were employed. During this same ten year period, 1910-1920, the average daily attendance in high schools increased 151 percent. While some of this increase is attributable to population growth, it also demonstrated that pupils who normally would not have attended high school during earlier days were now attending school (Hendrick, 1964, 20).

Since the children were legislated into the schools, new adaptations were felt necessary to meet the new situation. In addition to the apparent need for newly trained teachers with greater emphasis placed on pedagogy, another newly emerging American phenomenon was developing -- the professionally trained school administrator. Increasingly, Departments of Education were taking responsibility for the preparation of both teachers and school administrators.

The role of professional education in teacher training gained rapidly following 1920. Necessary sanction for this development came from the legislature, with leadership coming from the State Superintendent of Public Instruction and the new lay State Board of Education. In 1920 the Special Legislative Committee on Education discussed in its report the failure of normal schools to meet the demand for trained elementary teachers (Clement, 1936, 184). It recommended the gradual extension of the normal schools into four-year teachers' colleges with power to grant professional degrees. By 1921, this was accomplished. Control was taken from the separate boards of trustees and centralized in the State Board of Education and in the State Superintendents. In 1923 normal school training was increased from two to two and a half years, then to three years by 1927, and finally to a four-year baccalaureate program by 1930.

Unsurprisingly perhaps, as the state began to exercise greater and greater influence and control over the preparation of teachers, it also added credential specializations in new and applied fields, such as business and agriculture. The advance in professional teacher preparation requirements at the behest of the state is a development that soon worked both to improve and lower standards, depending on societal circumstances. State control implied that the state would be compelled to respond, sometimes in contradictory—but always pragmatic—ways, to social, economic, and political developments that impacted on the supply and demand of teachers. Thus, the Great Depression of the 1930s, with its accompanying oversupply of secondary social

science, physical education, and home economics teachers, helped enhance the quality of new teachers in those fields.

In 1930 a special Commission for the Study of Educational Problems was established to study how the State Department of Education should be organized. The timing of the commission and the circumstances that informed its recommendations occurred when there was a surplus of credentialed teachers. In this atmosphere of teacher surplus, the Commission was persuaded that low teacher quality and too easy access into teaching were critical problems in the field. One solution proposed by the Commission was the abolition of county certificates. The proposal supported the concept of college and university based teacher training over the long standing—though now little used—system of certifying teachers on the basis of county examinations.

A year later, in response to state competition for campuses of the University of California, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching organized a special commission to formulate a general plan for higher education in the state. Not all of the recommendations were implemented, but they did serve to point out the teaching level differences between the teachers colleges and the University of California. Organizationally, the Commission recommended that all higher education come under the stewardship of the University of California Regents. It also recommended that county authority for teacher certificates be abolished finally for all levels of teaching service. Seven types of state certificates were proposed by level of responsibility, including separate credentials for kindergarten-primary, elementary, secondary, junior college, supervision, administration, and special fields. The Commission believed that credentials should have overlapping features to provide an easy transition into the new type of school organization, one which in recent decades had begun to include junior high schools and junior colleges.

To conserve state resources, the Commission proposed that the several levels of public higher education become responsible for particular aspects of teacher preparation. As proposed, high school teachers would take their final three years of work at the University of California, thereby giving the University a definitive—and exclusive—role in teacher preparation, but one that also would require it to abandon its role in preparing elementary teachers. Those teachers would be prepared by the state colleges. The Commission's report was rejected by much of the profession, particularly the State Department of Education and the California Teachers Association. Among

its recommendations was one that the State Superintendent of Public Instruction be appointed by the State Board of Education, rather than be elected.

There were other committees and commissions on the state level that proposed various reforms applicable to state government in general and state teacher credentialing in particular. In 1941 the Committee on State Organization, chaired by San Francisco attorney Francis V. Kessling, included in its report a recommendation that the state cease issuing life certificates and replace them with ten year certificates based on teacher merit and standards set by the State Board.

After World War II, the need for teachers increased dramatically. Indeed, between 1950 and 1960 there occurred the most rapid school population growth in the state's history. Between 1950 and 1960 public school enrollments doubled as a percent, and increased absolutely by over 1.6 million students—from 1,661,051 to 3,304,485 (PACE, 1988, p. 3; California 1971, 177). With this growth came increased pressure from school districts for relaxed standards in teacher credentialing. Consistent with a century of experience, the need for teachers produced a relaxation of standards. According to Ralph Brott, an historian of teacher credentialing in California, an estimated 600,000 teachers had come into and left teaching between 1939 and 1945 (Brodt, 1989, 42). Accompanying that pressure in 1946 was a countervailing press for heightened standards in professional education requirements. Unsurprisingly, this advocacy came from the National Education Association's National Commission on Teacher Education and Professional Standards. The reform that eventually prevailed a decade and a half later focused on excesses in professional preparation (education courses).

Expansion of the state teachers' colleges into a broader liberal arts function during the 1930s detracted little from their original teacher training function. Meanwhile, at the University of California, the Department of Education continued to grow in responsibility for secondary teacher training, even as its overall stature on campus remained low. One educational authority writing in 1936 affirmed that the mandate for teacher training had been derived from the Legislature, not from the University, and noted "the indifference, if not the antagonism, of certain academic faculties who have maintained the traditional prejudices against teacher training." Furthermore, this same commentator went on to reprimand academic departments for being unaware of the complicated problems facing the public schools, and for being willing to

"forfeit the leadership of the university, all the while viewing with suspicion the development of the state normal colleges" (Clement, 1936, pp. 243-244).

Notwithstanding the difficulty which the pursuit of teacher education experienced within the University of California, the University continued to be a major force in preparing teachers and school administrators until its mission changed in favor of a greater emphasis on research and graduate education after 1960. Data from the State Department of Education revealed that in 1957-58, 3,358 people with bachelor's degrees from Berkeley held some form of credential for school service in California, ranking that campus first among all institutions of higher education in the state. Berkeley's younger sister campus, UCLA, ranked second with 3,231. By contrast, the largest producer of credential holders among the state colleges was San Jose State, with 2,871, followed by San Francisco State with 2,306. Among people awarded certificates in 1957-58, 2,991 had completed graduate units applicable to a credential at Berkeley, ranking it first among public institutions in the state. Only the University of Southern California, a private institution, had produced more (Hendrick, 1990, pp. 267-268).

The sometime scorning of courses in pedagogy by faculty members from the traditional academic departments became a consistent theme throughout the century. Although education departments were to increase their influence over teacher education during the first half of the twentieth century, there is good reason to believe that at mid-century they were really very little closer to becoming a vital part of the university academic community than they had been in 1932—or in 1892.

State credentialing requirements gave teachers two critically necessary elements in their quest for professional status: (1) acknowledgment that they possessed specialized knowledge and skills, and (2) recognition in the law. Standards were not high, but they existed. Teachers and those who prepared them still had to convince the public—and themselves—that teaching required specialized knowledge and skills attainable only through higher education and training. Professional level salaries and respect could not come in advance of that attainment. Although the public schools of California likely enjoyed as high a level of public support and respect during the early post World War II period as they ever would achieve in the twentieth century, the need to staff classrooms to accommodate the unprecedented number of children entering

public schools, and do so at a cost acceptable to the public, assured that the serious search for specialized professional skills would have to wait.

Well before the late 1950s, some leaders in professional education showed dissatisfaction with the nature of pedagogical training. As early as 1924 some teacher educators participating in a state sponsored teacher training conference questioned the wisdom of having the state prescribe large amounts of work in education (CSDE 1924, 5). Four years later a new credentialing plan was enacted which permitted universities and colleges greater freedom in arranging their training programs (Brown 1934, 162-163). On the whole, however, while teacher educators have long appreciated some measure of flexibility in defining their training programs, instances where they urged diminishing state professional education requirements in the name of greater institutional flexibility have been rare indeed. Even as the University of California, and to some extent, other higher education institutions, often favored limited state mandates in the interest of maximizing program flexibility, college and university faculty in education generally seemed to appreciate the protective tariff which was afforded by state mandated requirements in professional education.

One is led to conclude that the rise of university education departments, teachers' colleges, and state required professional training was done under the leadership of professional educators, and without strong societal objection. During 1931, the California Commission for the Study of Educational Problems (Vol. I, 83) even criticized the state teachers' colleges for not adhering more closely than they were to their strictly professional training objectives.[12] Yet, as the population grew in response to the California dream and industrialization, the complexity of California life eventually led to a greater diversity in higher education. As the mission of higher education expanded during the first half of the twentieth century, the normal schools at Los Angeles and Santa Barbara were brought into the University of California system for demographic and political reasons. The remainder became teachers colleges by 1921, then multipurpose state colleges by 1935, and ultimately campuses of the California State University by 1962 (Hendrick, 1980, p. 59).

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The California Commission for the Study of Educational Problems was appointed by the Governor and represented citizens from various occupational groups, but was chaired by Mrs. Susan M. Dorsey, Superintendent of the Los Angeles City Schools.

As the state colleges and universities became more diverse, the State Department of Education slowly assumed greater responsibility for defining teacher preparation requirements. An increasingly complex web of credential specializations was defined in the decade after World War II. The press for hiring new teachers was so intense that local and state school officials were able to influence state credential requirements in a way that met the personnel needs of school districts, although not without the generous use of "emergency" or temporary credentials. By mid-century the University of California, the state colleges, and a host of private colleges were all offering teacher preparation programs that were substantially defined by the state, albeit each with a measure of institutional uniqueness. This did not imply conflict, however. Indeed, the same deans, and professors who were leaders within their departments and schools of education were also leaders in influencing the nature of state requirements.

Through the 1950s state credential requirements were influenced primarily by the professional training views of teacher educators from schools of education and by the practical necessity to supply an unprecedented number of teachers for the public schools. Although dramatic change would occur during the 1960s, as forces which produced both the Master Plan for Higher Education (1960) and the Licensing of Certificated Personnel Law of 1961 (Fisher Act) became dominant, the 1950s ended with the University of California still the most influential higher education force in teacher education, and the State Department of Education firmly in control of teacher credentialing.